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CIVIL SERVICE COMPETITIONS,

CONSIDERED

AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING

POPULAR EDUCATION.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE substance of this Pamphlet consists of a Paper contributed to the Educational Conference held in London on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of June last. As circumstances prevented the paper from being then read and discussed, a desire has been expressed that it should be placed before the public in its present form.

The main object of the Paper was to shew how far the inferior appointments in the Civil Service of the Crown might—consistently, not merely with the efficiency but with the *increased* efficiency of the Civil Service itself,—be made available for the encouragement of school education and self-improvement in the great body of the people. Written for an *Educational* Conference, it, of course, discusses the proposed plan of competition principally from an educational point of view; but the course of argument adopted is such as sufficiently to protect the writer from the charge of seeking to promote education at the expense of the Civil Service. No one can hold more strenuously than he does that the main *object* of any change in the mode of making appointments to the public service must be—the welfare of that service; and that no change should be made, however beneficial in other respects, by which the Service would not be a gainer. But, if it be apparent that a certain alteration would not only attain this prime and essential object but would also produce, as one of its *results*, a wide extension of popular education, there can be nothing which should prevent a friend of education, or an Educational Conference, from advocating such an alteration for the sake of that result. Nor is there any good reason why the State itself, if satisfied that a certain change would be for the good of the Service, may not extend its view to the collateral advantages of the change, and all the more readily effect it on the very ground of those advantages. Especially are we entitled to expect that with a Government anxious to promote the education of the people such collateral benefits as would flow from the change now proposed would

have considerable influence; and that a plan which would stimulate the people in some measure to educate themselves would be felt to be quite as legitimate an encouragement for the State to offer as the direct payment of £1,000,000 per annum from the public taxes. Indeed, of the two modes by which the State can induce the people to acquire knowledge, viz.—(1) that of paying for their schooling out of the taxes, and (2) that of supplying them with a motive to pay for it themselves out of their own wages, probably the latter will not be considered either the less legitimate or the less efficacious mode. And one of the chief merits of the Competition System, viewed (as we are entitled to view it) with regard to its educational influences, would be its tendency to prolong the period of education beyond the ordinary school age, and thus happily prevent in many instances an evil which at present involves the absolute waste of much public money, viz., the loss by children, after quitting school, of the greater part of what they may have learned there during their attendance.

As to a supposed inexpediency, on economic grounds, of attracting persons from private to the public service, there can be little doubt that things would soon arrange themselves as regularly and quietly in this branch of employment as they do in every other. Even the allurements of the Gold-fields have now ceased to prevent a sufficient flow of labour into all its ordinary channels; and, in the face of this result, it is impossible to fear that after the experience of a year or two, the less exciting temptations of the Civil Service would occasion a lack of hands in any department of industry. The permanent number of expectants would probably not be much greater than the present plentiful supply; but they would be of a different and a better class—persons who would rely for success upon their own qualifications and not upon political services—persons also whose very training for the competition would facilitate their employment in another sphere of labour, in case they should fail in their endeavours to enter the service of the State. There always will be a certain number of situations to be filled up every year: it is impossible therefore to prevent the existence of a large

class of persons desirous of filling them. It can scarcely then be considered a disadvantage that this inevitable number of applicants should consist of those who have ability and industry to give in exchange to the Government, instead of those who have only votes to sell to members of Parliament.

There is little of novelty in the principal features of the plan here advocated. The idea of bestowing Government appointments according to the results of competitive examinations was developed in 1853, in the Report of Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir Stafford Northcote, on "The Reorganization of the Civil Service;" and the tendency, since that period, both of public opinion and of Governmental action, has been to affirm the substantial soundness of the views then advocated, and to recognize both the duties of the Civil Service as requiring the exertions of a higher class of officers and the utility of the examination test as a means of discovering practical ability. The chief fruits of these convictions have been, first, the Order in Council of 21st of May, 1855, prescribing a test of fitness, to which all entrants into the service are now subjected; and secondly, the Resolution of the 14th July, 1857—passed, with the assent of Government, by the House of Commons—that the plan of competition, which has been hitherto occasionally tried, should henceforth be more generally adopted.*

* *Resolution of July 14, 1857.*—"That in the opinion of this House, the experience acquired since the issuing of the Order in Council of the 21st day of May, 1855, is in favour of the adoption of the principle of competition, as a condition of entrance to the civil service; and that the application of that principle ought to be extended in conformity with the Resolution of the House agreed to on the 24th day of April, 1856." [See below.]

Resolution of 24th April, 1856.—"An address to thank Her Majesty for having caused to be laid before this House the report of the Civil Service Commissioners; to state humbly to Her Majesty that this House has observed with great satisfaction the zeal and prudence with which the Commissioners have proceeded in applying a remedy to evils of a serious character, the previous existence of which has now been placed beyond dispute, and also the degree of progress which has been made, with the sanction of the heads of various departments of the State towards the establishment of a system of competition among candidates for admission to the Civil Service; to assure Her Majesty of the steady support of this House in the prosecution of the salutary measures which she has been graciously pleased to adopt; and humbly to make known to Her Majesty, that if she shall think fit further to extend them, and to make trial in the Civil Service of the method of open competition as a condition of entrance, this House will cheerfully provide for any charges which the adoption of that system may entail."

No obstacle, therefore, seems now to prevent the practical prosecution of a scheme which, in its main and essential characteristics, has received the sanction both of the Executive authority and of the popular branch of the Legislature.

The design of the Paper which follows was to shew the applicability of the competitive scheme to the great number of situations *below the class of clerkships*, and the probable extent to which (while the service itself would be rendered much more effective) education would be favourably influenced by such a complete accomplishment of the wishes of the House of Commons. It is argued that, as incidental to the main objects of the Resolution (*viz.*—the abolition of patronage and the improvement of the service) a considerable encouragement would thus be diffused throughout the whole body of those educated at the elementary schools, and that both the average scholar and the advanced scholar would find a powerful motive for effort—such as it would be folly to expect that the love of learning for its own sake ever will supply—the prize to the former being the situation of Tidewaiter, Weigher, Letter-carrier, or Messenger, and that to the latter being the position of Surveying officer of Excise.

The latter class of appointments, however, by no means exhausts the whole number of prizes which would be within the reach of the more advanced pupils of these schools: there are many *Clerkships*, in various departments, to which they might reasonably aspire; and although perhaps it is to be expected that the majority of these would be gained by candidates from good middle-class schools, yet a fair proportion would doubtless reward the efforts of the best among the youth of the elementary schools.

It is hoped that, on some future occasion, a statement may be compiled shewing the entire number and the value of the clerkships and analogous situations in the whole Civil Service; so as to exhibit the utmost extent of the field which might be opened to competitive examinations, and to supply full materials for estimating the amount of encouragement to education

which the complete establishment of the system would provide. In the meantime, perhaps the following account, referring exclusively to the three *Revenue Departments*, viz. the Customs, the Inland Revenue, and the Post Office, may be useful in connection with the statistics given in the subsequent Paper.

1. The *number* of such situations is—

	London.	Other parts of England.	Scotland	Ireland.	Total.
In the Customs . . .	734	724*	141*	99*	1698
„ Inland Revenue.	572		68	45	685
„ Post Office . .	566	632	128	139	1465
Total . .	3228		337	283	3848

These figures represent the entire number of such clerkships in each of these departments; but each department is split up into a number of subordinate departments, each distinct from each; and the officers of these sub-departments are divided into a variety of grades or classes, of varying numbers and scales of salary. Thus, in the Customs at London there are 17 sub-departments; in the Inland Revenue 11; and in the Post Office 6. The number of *classes* in each sub-department varies from *two*, which is the smallest, to eight, which is the greatest, number. Every newly appointed clerk, enters, of course, the lowest class. The number of clerks required to fill all the *lowest* classes in each department is—

In the Customs	562
„ Inland Revenue	244
„ Post Office (about)	726
	1532

* The “Estimates” do not distinguish the different classes of offices, except in London. These figures are therefore taken from a Parliamentary Return upon Superannuation (No. 414 Sess. 1856) and relate to 1st of Jan. 1856.

2. The number of vacancies created within a given time depends obviously upon the number of removals throughout the whole body of clerks, by promotion, resignation, or death, thus causing vacancies in the lowest classes, to be filled up by the appointment of strangers to the establishment. The only estimate of the frequency of such vacancies, which at present I am able to form, is founded upon the experience of the Civil Service examinations; and from this source I learn that in the two years, from May 1855 to May 1857, the Commissioners granted certificates to 268 clerks, &c. in the Customs, and to 107 in the Inland Revenue: while in the Post Office, the number of certificates granted between June 1856* and June 1857 was 137; giving, as the average annual number of fresh appointments.—

In the Customs		134
„ Inland Revenue		53
„ Post Office		137
		324

3. The *value* of the situations is not easily computed; consisting, as it does, of two parts, viz. (i.) the immediate annual salary upon entrance, and (ii.) the prospective increase obtained by annual advances within a class and by promotion from one class to another. The *minimum* value, however, can easily be stated as follows†:—

* *Provincial* clerks in the Post Office were not examined by the Civil Service Commissioners before June 1856.

† *i. e.* on the assumption that the lowest classes of the following—

Clerks in each Sub-Department or Port,
Searchers and Landing Waiters,
Principal Coast Officers,

are to be filled up uniformly by selection from the public, and not by transfers of persons already in the service.

IN THE CUSTOMS.

Salary at Entrance.	From "Estimates," 1857-8.		From Parliamentary Return on Superannuation.			Total.
	London.	Liverpool.	Other parts of England	Scotland.	Ireland.	
£.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.
60	...	...	4	...	...	4
70	35	10	25	21	2	93
75	93	16	2	2	1	114
80	18	...	60	25	11	114
90	...	...	1	1	...	2
100	9	...	55	15	12	91
120	...	...	13	4	3	20
125	22	...	...	...	...	22
150	...	22	26	13	11	72
160	30	...	...	...	...	30
	207	48	186	81	40	562

IN THE INLAND REVENUE.

Salary at Entrance.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
£.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.
75	...	11	...	11
80	5	21	...	26
90	177	...	12	189
100	15	...	3	18
	197	32	15	244

IN THE POST OFFICE.

Salary at Entrance.	London.	Edinburgh.	Dublin.	Other parts of the U. K.	Surveyors' Clerks.	Total.
£.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.	Clerks.
60	18	...	...	300*	...	318
80	311	...	...	...	42	353
125	...	23	32	...	...	55
	329	23	32	about 300*	42	726

* The "Estimates" afford no means of determining more nearly the number of junior Provincial Clerks. Their salaries vary from £53. upwards; the average probably being between £60 and £70.

As to subsequent advancement, the chances depend upon so many varying elements—such as the different number of clerks in each sub-department and in each class, the different scales of salary established for each sub-department and class, the different rates at which salaries annually increase in different sub-departments and classes, and the number of offices, above the rank of clerkships, to which clerks may be promoted—that it is next to impossible to make any average valuation. The following, however, shews the *maximum* scale of salary attainable by a *Clerk* in the Customs Establishments of London and Liverpool, in the Inland Revenue throughout England and Wales, and in the London Post Office; and the number of clerks by whom the maximum scale can at the same time be enjoyed.

Maximum Scales.		Number of Clerks under each Scale.			
		Customs.	Inland Revenue.	Post Office.	Total.
£.	£.				
140	to 200	...	...	2	2
150	... 250	...	2	...	2
160	... 210	...	3	...	3
200	... 250	...	6	...	6
200	... 290	...	2	...	2
200	... 350	7	...	...	7
230	... 260	12	...	...	12
230	... 300	3	...	...	3
240	... 300	7	...	...	7
250	... 290	15	...	...	15
250	... 450	...	1	...	1
260	... 300	4	...	...	4
260	... 350	...	...	34	34
270	... 300	3	...	...	3
300	... 450	...	2	...	2
315	... 350	2	...	...	2
320	... 400	3	...	...	3
350	... 450	...	4	...	4
400	... 450	...	14	...	14
400	... 600	...	...	11	11
500	... 600	...	2	...	2
£350*		19	...	...	19
400†		20	...	...	20
460‡		...	12	...	12
		95	48	47	190

* Landing Waiters, Gaugers, &c. † Landing Waiters.

‡ Surveyors of Taxes.

This may give some idea of the ultimate positions to which the 190 survivors of about 800 contemporaneous occupants of the lowest places would arrive in the natural course of things ; not taking into account a certain number of more elevated offices, for supplying the vacancies in which the most meritorious of the 190 might be selected.

I do not pretend that the foregoing figures give a very clear notion of the amount of inducement which might be held out to competitors. Perhaps the main facts upon this point are--- that every year there will become vacant, in these three departments, about 300 situations of the immediate value of from £60. to £100. per annum, with the certainty of a slow gradual increase, and an ultimate prospect, in the London offices, of probably £300. a year, with a chance of succeeding, by selection of the most meritorious, to such of the "staff" offices as may become vacant.

It cannot perhaps be contended that to the whole of these situations one uniform plan of competition could be conveniently applied ; neither is it necessary so to contend, as competitions can be easily arranged with variations in the details adapted to peculiar circumstances. It is sufficient, therefore, to say that nearly the whole of these 300 annual vacancies can be filled up by the successful candidates in some description of competitive examination.

Since the passing of the Resolution of the House of Commons a plan of limited competition has been adopted ; applicable, however, exclusively to *permanent clerkships*, and usually confined as regards those to a contest between three persons (nominated by the Government) for one vacancy. This is undoubtedly an improvement upon the previous practice of single nomination ; but it is easy to shew that in many respects this plan contrasts unfavourably with that of more open and general competitive examinations. In the first place, as the Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners prove that, on an average, one out of every three of the Candidates who come before them is

incompetent to pass even a *test* examination, the competition is virtually between *two* only for each vacancy. In the next place, the present plan affords no security for the proper allocation of the successful competitors. As each competition has reference to one particular appointment, it is not merely probable but certain that some of the best men will be placed in the least important positions, and that far inferior persons will obtain the highest prizes and be intrusted with the most responsible functions. The existing plan is therefore defective in two points, (i) it does not secure for the public service the best men obtainable, nor even the best of those who are nominated, and (ii) it does not ensure that such right men as may be discovered shall be put in their right places. Both of these deficiencies would be avoided under a well managed system of extended competition. In the first place, the first fifty candidates in a competition of several hundreds (or even of 150, on the assumption of only three candidates to one vacancy) would be greatly superior to the 50 victors in 50 competitions of three to each. In the next place, the former fifty might easily be assigned to particular offices according to the peculiarity of their individual merits as shewn in the results of the examination; which, although not an infallible criterion of special fitness, must at least afford a far better indication of such fitness than any that is now obtained.

H. M.

26th September, 1857.

PAPER

[Prepared for the Educational Conference of June, 1857].

THE subject which I have undertaken to introduce to the Conference is briefly this:—"Competition for certain appointments in the Civil Service, considered as a means of promoting popular education."

As it is, perhaps, known to some now present, that I have the honour of holding an appointment under the Civil Service Commissioners, it may be advisable, in order to obviate all possible misapprehension, to state that the following remarks and suggestions have been written entirely on my own responsibility as a private individual, and that I have had no communication on the subject with the Commissioners, except so far as to ascertain that they recognize the privilege which has been so beneficially employed by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and others, and which is now generally conceded to public officers, of expressing in an unofficial manner, their individual opinions upon questions of public interest.

The general question of competitions for the Civil Service has probably been rendered familiar to nearly all present by the Report of Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir S. Northcote. I am not now about to say anything new upon the subject; and what I shall say that is old has been better said by the Reporters and by the commentators on the Report; but it seems to me extremely desirable, that attention should be directed to the scheme there recommended, with especial reference to its applicability to that particular portion of the Service which draws its recruits from the popular day schools of the country. I allude to what may be called the *inferior* portion of the Service, including the Excisemen in the Inland Revenue, the Letter-carriers and Sorters in the Post Office, the Tidewaiters and Weighers in the Customs, and the whole force of messengers and similar officials wherever they may be found. The plan of Sir C. Trevelyan, it is well known, embraces the entire Civil Service; his recommendation being, that all vacancies in junior situations, whether Clerkships or more subordinate positions, should

be filled up by the successful competitors in examinations adapted to the respective offices. The argument of the Report, however, is evidently applied more particularly to competitions for *clerkships*, and to the best means of attracting to the public service the more highly educated portion of the youth of this country—those in fact who obtain their instruction in the public endowed schools, and other efficient schools for the middle classes. If, however, I rightly understand the object of this Conference, it is to discover the best means of making really effective the education given in what may be called our *popular* Day Schools, such as those connected with the National and British and Foreign Societies, and with various religious bodies. It has, therefore, seemed desirable to limit the scope of this paper to the inferior situations already mentioned; and I propose to ask with respect to these situations, whether the plan of filling them up by competition would not be attended by very considerable benefit, in the first place to the Civil Service itself, and, in the second place, to the cause of popular education and advancement. I put the Civil Service first, and education second in this inquiry, because, while yielding to no one in a desire for the promotion of the latter, I certainly concur most strongly with the opinion, that whatever alterations may be made in the Civil Service should be made with a primary reference to the interests of the Civil Service itself, and that no change, however fertile in other social advantages, can be justified, unless it be advantageous, or at least not detrimental, to the Service which is made the subject of it. It will, consequently, I fear, be necessary to trouble the meeting with a few remarks upon this point; but I hope to be able to shew that a system of competitions for the posts referred to, while giving a great impulse to education, would, so far from being hurtful or even merely innocuous to the Civil Service, tend greatly to promote its efficiency. But first, let us try and gain a clear idea of the number, nature, and value of the situations proposed for competition.

From the estimates for the financial year 1856-7, we collect the following numbers, or approximations, referring to the whole of the United Kingdom:—

Excise officers	3310
Sorters, Letter Carriers and Mail Guards, exclusive of Rural Post Letter Carriers	5079
Tidewaiters and Weighers	2952
Messengers, Porters, Watchmen, Gatekeepers, Stampers, Packers, &c.	1277
	12,618

making a total of 12,618. From the same source we may ascertain pretty nearly what are the emoluments derivable from these situations. The amounts vary according to circumstances and localities, being, as respects the Customs and Post Office, higher in London than elsewhere, and in the large towns than in the rural districts. The salaries of Excise Officers, however, are the same all over the country. Taking the London scale as to the others, the average emoluments of the various classes may, perhaps, be fairly stated as follows :—

Tidewaiters	£73, rising to £93.
Weighers	64 „ 74.
Letter Carriers, &c.	50 „ 80 or 90.
Messengers and others	60 „ 80.

For country appointments, a deduction of, perhaps, ten per cent should be made with respect to all but Excise Officers, who enter at about £80 a year, rising to £85 or £90 in about two years, and to £100 in two years more.

The annual number of vacancies occurring in the ranks of these officers may probably be stated at about 700 or 800, that being the number of certificates granted in a year by the Civil Service Commissioners. There is, indeed, a considerable number of less valuable appointments, for which, probably, some sort of competition might be beneficially established; but I propose to confine attention to those enumerated, as the necessity for *some* examination of the persons nominated to them is admitted by the fact that they are already subject to a *test* examination, conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners.

It may be added, that the situations in the Customs and Excise are in the gift of the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury. Of those in the Post Office, the ostensible patron is the Postmaster General.

Now, the point which I am desirous of pressing upon the Conference is, that if *prizes* are wanted to induce the working classes to improve the education of their children, *here are 700 or 800 prizes available every year*. Prizes, too, of some value ; indeed, I should think of value ample enough to induce a parent to forego, for the chance of obtaining one, his boy's premature earnings, which, though trifling in themselves, are probably sufficient to outweigh in his estimation any other prizes which are likely to be offered.

And is it not some such preponderating inducement which is the main thing needed ? For practically the course pursued by parents with respect to their children's education, will generally be determined by a rough, shrewd calculation of the balance of material advantages. If it is likely to pay to keep the children at school, they will be kept there ; if it is likely to pay better to take them away, they will be taken away. The question, therefore, which I put is, whether the distribution every year of 700 prizes, each worth from £50 to £80 per annum, with further prospects, would not be likely to make education appear to very many parents a better speculation than ignorance ; and, assuming this to be the case, the preliminary question is, whether these prizes can be established with advantage, or at least without hurt, to the Civil Service, which would have to provide them.

Now, in estimating the effect of the proposed change upon the efficiency of the Service, it is important to bear constantly in mind the fact that the comparison is not between the system of competition and a system of absolute perfection, but between competition and any other practicable system. This distinction has, it seems to me, been too much overlooked or disregarded by the opponents of competition. For instance, a compendious objection brought against the plan by an eminent antagonist, is,

that it is not a "self-acting test which enables us to distinguish "with unerring precision, and with mechanical regularity, between the worthy and the unworthy candidate." This objection is true without being forcible. The fallibility of the competition test could only be fatal to the principle of competition if the existing test, or some other practicable test, were proved to be *infallible*. As the facts at present stand, the real question is, whether, as a means of discovering fitness, Competition is not better than mere Nomination. If the alternative were—fallible Competition against infallible Patronage, the question of a choice between them could be raised only to be dismissed; but, both plans being liable to error, it is allowable to ask whether Competition is not the safer plan of the two, and so much the safer as to justify its extensive application to the public service. Undoubtedly I do not contend that Competition is an unerring test: I limit my recommendation of it to the mere statement that it is the best test that can be found, and immeasurably better than the no-test of Patronage.

When, therefore, it is said that a literary examination furnishes no sure test of official aptitude, which consists mainly in industry, intelligence, sound judgment, and various moral qualities, the reply is—Does it not furnish a better test of these qualifications than the system of Patronage? It is quite true that success in a literary competition affords only a *presumption* of the existence of the requisite ability and fitness; but does nomination by a patron furnish anything more? If, indeed, the system of Patronage implied the possession by the nominator of an intimate acquaintance with the character, attainments and special abilities of each nominee, it might be reasonably urged that the presumption afforded by competitive examinations could not possibly equal the certainty derived from such official omniscience; but, however perfect may be the theory of Patronage, it is perhaps permissible to imagine that, in practice, most of the nominations are bestowed for other reasons than well-ascertained desert; and in the absence of a thorough knowledge by the patron of his client's fitness, the question

recurs whether competition does not offer the best attainable criterion. Superiority in a literary contest reveals at least the existence of industry and intelligence; and, without contending that these qualities must necessarily be accompanied by all the other important requisites, it is at all events more likely that the latter will be found where the former are known to be present than where they have not been discovered. No doubt, it is quite possible that the very best man in such a contest might not be so well adapted for the situation to be filled as one of his unsuccessful rivals; but the question turns upon averages not upon individual cases. To adopt an illustration given by Mr. Temple, whatever may be the merit of any single victor in such a trial as compared with any single nominee, it is quite certain that the first *twenty* victors will be better and fitter than any other twenty. And what he says with respect to candidates for *clerkships* I venture to say with respect to candidates for inferior positions, and to express my belief that twenty Tidewaiters who could read, write, and cipher *well*, and compose a sensible letter on an ordinary topic would be not only better men but better Tidewaiters than twenty less-instructed officers. And then it must not be assumed that a competition might not be made to include other than mere *literary* tests. Indeed, for my own part, I believe that experience would gradually lead to the adoption of continually improved methods of discovering and measuring an actual capacity for business.

Then, again, to take those *moral* qualities which are even more essential than are mental qualifications to the efficiency of a public servant; are not the means of investigating the character of candidates as available under the system of competition as under that of Government nomination? If careful inquiries as to character and disposition have always hitherto preceded the exercise of Government patronage on behalf of Tidewaiters, Weighers, and Excisemen, a similar scrutiny might continue to be made, with at least equal zeal and perhaps with even more effect, by those to whom the conduct of competitions

might be entrusted. At all events, the scheme to be presently described is intended, and I think adapted, to secure in an especial manner the strongest guarantees for the good behaviour of admitted officers ; and it will be for the Conference to judge whether it does not offer more security in this respect than can at present be obtained.

It is not contended, however, that Competition would altogether prevent the entrance of unfit persons into the service. Some such persons must be expected to find admittance under any system. It is merit enough to claim for the plan of Competition that, while increasing the number and the efficiency of meritorious officers, it would both diminish the number and facilitate the removal of the incapable and ill-conducted. The remedy for the unavoidable admission of unsuitable persons is to be found in subsequent official discipline. Rewards and penalties—promotions, degradations, and dismissals—must be the means by which the body of officers in each department should be constantly preserved in a state of entire efficiency. There ought to be no excessive delicacy in such a matter ; and, under a system of Competition, there need be none. Dismissal should follow, as of course, upon proof of unsuitableness, misconduct, or incapacity. The public has as much right as have private persons to decline to be ill-served, and no tenderness need be felt at getting rid of those who, knowing the conditions of the contract, voluntarily enter the service of the State.* The great evil of the present mode of treatment is that the good men are not adequately rewarded and the bad men are not sufficiently punished. I believe that the introduction of competition would render both courses more easy ; though, singularly enough, it is one of the objections brought against that plan, that it would weaken the authority of the Heads of Departments, who, it is

* The late Mr. John Wood, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, says upon this point:—"The presiding power of the Department ought to have the free power of dismissal, and it would be a great advantage if too much regard were not paid to fixity of tenure, but that removal from office should be exercised with as little scruple in the service of the State as in that of individuals."—*Papers relating to the Re-organization of the Civil Service.*

said, could not be fairly held responsible for the conduct and efficiency of officers imposed upon them by an external power. The objection seems to me to be peculiarly inapplicable under present circumstances; for, in the first place, nearly all the appointments in the Customs and Excise are now made wholly irrespective of the heads of those departments, and in the next place, it is notorious that the great majority of appointments, whether made by the Treasury or not, are made for considerations not exclusively connected with the public interests. The result is, that a government situation now is regarded by the nominee much as if it were a piece of property in the gift of his patron; and this idea, however erroneous, unquestionably influences the heads of departments in their treatment of their officers, and procures for inefficiency a toleration greatly hurtful to the public service. But the rule of appointments by competition would certainly destroy this notion. The title to a place in the Civil Service could no longer be supposed to be derived mainly from the favour of a patron, but must be regarded as depending solely on the presumption, created by successful examination, of fitness for official duties. The different effect, upon subsequent discipline, of these two different views of what constitutes the title to a situation, must be obvious: in the former case the impression produced is that a presentation by the patron is the one and only thing needful, and that this once gained and the test examination satisfied, the nominee has obtained a life interest in the property, whatever may be his future conduct, if it be not extravagantly bad;* in the latter case, the impression must be that as the promise of fitness formed the sole title of admission to the service, it can only be by the continued realisation of that promise that continuance in the service can be ensured.†

* "Mr. Bromley, the Accountant General of the Navy, mentions that he has known many instances of individuals boldly stating they were not put into the service by their patrons to work."—*Papers relating to the Re-organization of the Civil Service*, p. 54.

† It may perhaps be objected that the strictness of discipline here recom-

The argument in brief then is that by adopting the system of competition for civil appointments, combined with a strictness of discipline which under that system would be natural and easy of enforcement, a much better average of public servants, both mentally and morally, would be obtained than is possible under a continuance of the system of simple patronage; and this conclusion is but little affected by the fact that the nominees of patrons are now subjected to a *test* examination which excludes such as fall short of certain prescribed standards of minimum efficiency. As a check upon the excessive abuse of patronage, the examinations conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners are, undoubtedly, of considerable utility; as is shewn by the fact that, down to the end of 1856, they had rejected 144 Tidewaiters and Weighers out of 415 examined—220 Excise Expectants out of 555 examined—and 73 Letter Carriers out of 236 examined; being altogether 437 rejected out of 1206 examined, or 36 per cent. But it must be remembered that their power is limited to this prevention of abuses: they can turn back those who are absolutely too bad to be admitted; but they cannot secure the admission of those only who are the best amongst the competent. The effect of the present scheme is (1) that the utterly-incapable are all excluded, which is an evident advantage, and (2) that those who are admitted are not-utterly-incapable, which is also satisfactory, though not so satisfactory as would be the assurance that all were actually capable and the most capable that could be procured. Such an assurance, or the nearest possible approach to it, I believe we should obtain by a well regulated

mended would, by rendering more or less precarious the situations obtained, lessen their value as prizes, and consequently the strength of the inducement to compete for them. It may be so; but the question is, whether, notwithstanding this drawback, the prizes would not be of ample value to attract worthy competitors; and I see no reason to doubt that plenty of good candidates would be found desirous of obtaining £60 or £70 a year, subject to a condition so much within their own power of fulfilment as that of continued good behaviour.

system of competition ; and entertaining this conviction of the beneficial operation of the plan upon the Civil Service itself, I feel, as otherwise I should not feel, quite free to consider what influence it would exert upon the promotion of popular education.

Let me then proceed to suggest, as briefly as I can, a scheme of competition for inferior appointments, and to point out the way in which it would probably stimulate in some measure the education of the people. And to make the discussion as simple as possible, my future remarks and illustrations will relate exclusively to England and Wales. If the plan suggested should be considered worthy of adoption in this part of the United Kingdom, it could easily be adapted to the somewhat different circumstances of Scotland and Ireland.

The number of vacancies in inferior situations requiring to be annually filled up in England and Wales may be estimated at about 650, viz.—

Tidewaiters and Weighers	250
Expectants of Excise	230
Letter Carriers	150
Messengers and others	20
	650

The annual value of these situations ranges, as already stated, from £50 to £80 ; and is generally above £60.

Well, the proposal is that these 650 situations should be filled up by selecting the 650 persons who, on competitive examinations, should appear to be the best qualified ; superiority in this respect being indicated by superior excellence in the subjects prescribed for examination, whatever these might be. At present, the test examination for all these officers includes hand-writing, spelling, and elementary arithmetic : for Tidewaiters and Weighers a knowledge of the weights and measures is also required ; and the arithmetic of Excise Expectants includes vulgar and decimal fractions. Probably for a *competitive* examination a uniform list of subjects might be adopted,

including the composition of a simple letter on an ordinary topic—which seems to me a very valuable test of intelligence. (I have already intimated my own conviction that further tests might be devised to measure still more directly a man's *practical aptitude* for official duties ; but it will probably be best to confine attention now to the subjects indicated above.)

The competitions should be held periodically, and at no distant intervals (perhaps quarterly), in order that the Departments might be regularly recruited. They should also take place in different parts of the country, in order that the encouragement to education might be generally and equally diffused. The whole might be managed with the utmost facility, and at a very trifling expense. No one need fear lest the country should be overrun by a large army of Examiners from Oxford or Cambridge. As the examination papers would be prepared at the Central Office in London, and as the performances of the candidates would all be transmitted thither for analysis and judgment, it would only be necessary to secure the presence at the local examinations of a trustworthy, intelligent, and business-like officer, capable of carrying out the requisite mechanical arrangements, and ensuring order and fairness in the contest.

If the examinations were held quarterly, the number of prizes to be put up for competition would be regulated by the number of vacancies estimated to occur in the course of the succeeding quarter (say 150), and these prizes would be awarded to the 150 persons whose names might appear first on the list issued by the Civil Service Commissioners, after their decision upon the various performances, provided that these successful competitors had produced satisfactory evidence of their being (1) within the age prescribed, (2) physically competent for their duties, and (3) of good moral character. Of course, no amount of excellence in the literary examinations could counterbalance any serious deficiency in either of the three latter points ; and I have already urged that Competition

admits of at least as much carefulness as does Patronage in testing a man's qualifications in these respects.

The next point is, what should be the extent of, or restriction upon, competition, with reference to the number of competitors? There appears to be a choice between three courses, viz. either (1) the Government might nominate a certain number to compete, or (2) there might be "open competition," so that every one who wished might compete, or (3) there might be some other mode of a regulated nomination of candidates to compete. The adoption of either of these courses would, no doubt, supply a stimulus to education, and "open competition" would probably prove the most powerful attraction of all; but for various reasons my own inclination is in favour of a plan which would combine the features of both competition and nomination. Without saying that open competition is not perfectly applicable, it may nevertheless be advisable, especially with reference to the class of officers now under consideration, that the first alteration in the present system should be of a less thorough character, and such as might afterwards be treated either as a step towards, or a substitute for, open competition, just as experience should recommend. It certainly also appears to me that the plan of nomination might be made of essential use in providing satisfactory guarantees of the *character* of competitors. If the nominators of candidates were such as could speak of them from the results of a personal, rather than a mere political acquaintance, and especially if this personal knowledge had been acquired in the discharge of semi-public functions rather than from the circumstance of private relationship or friendship, we should have not merely a much better security than we have at present, but also about the best security attainable, that such as might be admitted into the public service would be persons of unexceptionable character and conduct.

To whom, then—if competitions such as those suggested were established—should the privilege be granted of selecting

the competitors? Who should be allowed to nominate to the quarterly contests? It would doubtless be desirable that the power of nominating should not be confined to one source but be entrusted to various hands; so that all the many diverse sections of the English people might be fairly represented in these struggles, and have each a fair chance of contributing its special excellence to the public service. It is not my purpose, however, to enumerate the different parties upon whom this power might be advantageously conferred: it would doubtless be well employed by the clergy of the Church of England and by the ministers of the principal congregations of Dissenters; probably the heads of departments would exercise it for the public benefit; and perhaps by the members of the legislature it might, under the altered circumstances, be used without detriment. But my present object is limited to this suggestion—that into whatsoever other hands the privilege might be also committed, it would certainly be highly beneficial both to the Civil Service and to popular education, if it were confided to the *Managers of most of the popular Day Schools throughout the country.*

It would be useless at present to go into details as to the conditions upon which a school should be entitled to this privilege. Perhaps the only condition necessary would be that the School was efficiently conducted. This rule would of course admit at once all schools approved by H. M. Inspectors; but it need not exclude others not subject to their inspection. There are doubtless many excellent Church schools receiving only diocesan inspection—British schools inspected only by the agents of the British and Foreign Society—and schools of Dissenters who object on conscientious grounds to the receipt of public money. It would be desirable to avoid even the appearance of exclusiveness in such a matter, and every school which might be proved, by whatever evidence, to be efficient, to the satisfaction of some neutral and impartial authority, should be placed in the schedule of those, the managers of which should be allowed to nominate a limited number of candidates for trial in the next competition.

The nomination, I consider, ought to be made in a very formal manner. The grounds upon which a candidate is recommended should be fully mentioned; and the nominators should be required to state, amongst other things, that the nominee has received instruction for at least a fixed minimum number of years in their school, that his conduct then was satisfactory, that since quitting school he has continued to be well known to the Managers, either by attendance at evening schools, evening classes, church or chapel, or by other sufficient circumstances, and that they can vouch for the continuance of his good conduct down to the time of his nomination. A form containing these and other essential statements should be supplied by the Civil Service Commissioners, who should have power to disallow the nomination if all these statements were not vouched for to their satisfaction.

Now I think it will scarcely be disputed that the Civil Service must derive great advantages from this plan, as far as the *character* of its officers is concerned; since, instead of the introduction of a candidate proceeding from a political officer, knowing nothing whatever of his antecedents, or from a relative or friend having strong personal interest in his success, there would be the guarantee of responsible persons, having full opportunities of judging of their nominee's deserts, and being perfectly free from all suspicion of interested motives. Indeed there can hardly be any comparison as to the moral value of two sets of officers selected under such different auspices; and no one can reasonably doubt that the successful competitors amongst candidates thus selected would prove themselves to possess, in a far higher degree than the present officers, just the very qualities which the Heads of Departments so urgently demand—honesty, sobriety, subordination, industry, and general trustworthiness. Nor is there much danger in prophesying that the higher mental attainments, which the successful competitors must of necessity possess, would be found very advantageous to the public even in the inferior posi-

tions which they would have to occupy. There is no work, however humble or mechanical, which cannot be better done by an intelligent than by a stupid officer; and if it be feared that the victors in competition would be above their duties, we may be assured that this is an evil which, independently of the remedy to be found in official discipline, would work its own cure as competitions became thoroughly established and familiar. In the meantime, however, it is satisfactory to have the testimony of actual experience in favour of the plan; and this is supplied by the late Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, who tells us that in disposing of the few nominations in his gift, he had been favoured by the assistance of persons distinguished by their exertions for education, and amongst them by the Dean of Hereford. "Pupils," Mr. Wood says, "have been selected from schools under their immediate superintendence; and after undergoing the examination prescribed by our departmental regulations, have been appointed to the surveying branch of the Excise. The result," he adds, "has been most satisfactory as regards both the attainments and conduct of the young men so selected." *

But what would be the effect of the scheme upon education? Would it tend to prolong the period of school instruction? In connection with this inquiry, we must not forget that these situations, considered as prizes, could not be awarded to lads immediately upon their quitting school, even though they might protract their stay there for several years beyond the present average age of departure; for the limits of age prescribed for admission to these situations prevent the employment of any person as a Letter Carrier before the age of 17—as an Excise Expectant before 19—as a Tidewaiter or Weigher before 20—and as a Messenger before from 21 to 25; and as these inferior limits have no doubt been carefully determined by the Heads of the several Departments with a full conviction of their propriety we cannot look for any alteration tending to facilitate an earlier entrance. It is therefore evident that the prizes could not be

* Papers relating to the Re-organization of the Civil Service, p. 306.

awarded for prolonged School-attendance *alone*, so as to be enjoyed immediately upon the performance of that condition. But would not the practical result be even far more beneficial? Could we not secure, in fact, not only a longer attendance at School, but also a better employment of the after-School life, so that not only should there be more time in which to plant the seeds of knowledge, but greater security that whatever has been planted will be saved from perishing? I conceive that both of these desirable results would be accomplished by the plan in question; and that thus what at first sight may appear to be a drawback from the value of the scheme, in its bearing on the educational problem, is really an additional advantage.

(1.) For, in the first place, although these situations cannot be bestowed as the rewards of longer school-attendance *merely*, yet the point is, whether—if prolonged School attendance were found to be practically the most certain method of obtaining a nomination—the desire of contending for a prize at a future time would not be sufficient inducement to insure in many cases the adoption of this means of attaining the wished-for opportunity. Would not many parents of lads 14 years old, when scheming for their settlement in life, be glad to look forward to the chance of their employment five or six years afterwards in the Post Office, Excise, or Customs? and would they not therefore be induced, for the sake of increasing this chance, to continue the school instruction for (say) two years more? A parent of this class is not without shrewdness in such calculations, and probably he would argue with himself, acutely enough, that if he took his boy away at once, the chance of a nomination would be almost worthless; while by keeping him at school a little longer, he would not only be helping him to a chance of a prize, but would be furnishing him with instruction which, even if he should be unsuccessful in the attempt, or indisposed to make it, could not fail to be useful to him in whatever occupation he might then select.

(2.) But, not only by thus inducing a prolongation of School-

time, would the plan suggested tend to encourage popular Education: this end I conceive would be even more importantly promoted by the stimulus given to self-improvement in the period immediately subsequent to the school-age. As none of the prizes could be realized before the age of 17, and most of them not until 19 or 20, there would necessarily be in almost every case an interval between the school and the competition. This would no doubt be passed in labour of some description; and beneficially so, for labour is itself a part of education, and a very valuable part. But the tendency of the plan proposed would be to induce the young men attracted by these prizes to unite with the education afforded by labour the knowledge gained from books and personal instructors. The mere necessity of a competition in the subjects previously mentioned would probably suffice to secure this necessary preparation; but the probability would become almost a certainty under the scheme suggested; since, the credit of each school being in some degree at stake, the Managers would take care to nominate none who had not industriously used their opportunities of learning. Now, I do not apprehend that it will be heresy against the objects of the Conference if I confess that to me it appears even more important to devise measures for preserving and developing what is taught at school than to extend the limits of school-age; for doubtless the practical ends desired by the Conference would be equally attained whether children were to be actually enticed from labour to the School, or the School were to be virtually carried into the factory and the field. I need therefore make no excuse for the plan now presented to the notice of the Conference, on the ground that while undoubtedly tending to elevate the upper limit of school-age, it would probably produce its *greatest* effect in the period immediately succeeding that of school-tuition. This, indeed, is perhaps the most critical period in the educational life; and it is to be feared that at present, without adequate inducements to the preservation of what has been ac-

quired at School, this critical period is employed by great numbers of young persons in simply getting rid of all they had previously learned. But if the rule were adopted, and generally made known, that the chance of a Government appointment would be given by School Managers to such as could shew that they had endeavoured to retain and add to their school instruction, an inducement to study would be found sufficiently powerful to act upon some thousands, at all events, of the people, and make them strive both to keep what they had got, and to get what more might be essential.

I will not further weary the Conference by extending my remarks. The plan proposed is, I apprehend, sufficiently before them to enable them to judge how far, consistently with the interests of the Civil Service, it would have the effect of stimulating popular education. As admitted at the commencement of this paper, I have not attempted to advance anything new, either in the way of plan or recommendation: my object has merely been (as the best plans are liable to be forgotten unless constantly kept before the public mind) to seize this opportunity of recalling attention to the suggestions made by Sir C. Trevelyan in 1854—suggestions which, if followed, would I believe exert a very happy influence upon the cause which this Conference has met to promote. I do not indeed, put forward Competition as a grand panacea, which is to extinguish popular ignorance; for undoubtedly in this country a real education of the people can only be effected by the combined action of a great variety of means. Not only Schools, but also churches, chapels, effective preaching, public libraries, newspapers, better dwellings, postal facilities, the possession or the prospect of the franchise—in short all things which are calculated to arouse ambition or awaken curiosity in men—are so many means of extending education. And of such means Competition would be one, and probably no unimportant one. It is true that six hundred prizes annually may seem an insignificant affair amongst the multitudes of our young population; but, if these six hun-

dred prizes stir up the minds and energies of some six thousand persons every year, surely such a result would be by itself an ample encouragement, as indicating not merely a direct influence to that extent but also a much wider indirect influence upon the people at large, in whose sight the importance of knowledge would thus be recognized and the exhibition of it rewarded. Surely such a spectacle, continually repeated, would produce even in the minds of the mass of *non-competitors* a sense of the value of instruction, when they should see, as see they would, that the benefits obtained were not confined to the victors, but that even the vanquished gained some prize, though not the one expected. Few, it may be confidently prophesied, would be those who would go wholly unrewarded; either mentally or materially most would find an ample recompense for their exertions, and many of the unsuccessful would soon discover that they had been disappointed advantageously. The old fable would again be realized: the young men digging up the field for the sake of the hidden treasure, would find in the fruitful soil a greater treasure than the one which they had vainly sought for.

And then, lastly, it is no unimportant advantage of this scheme, at a time when financiers are disposed to look with alarm at the annually increasing burden of the Educational grants, that the improvement, of whatever extent it might be, thus effected in the Educational position of the working classes, would be effected *at an insignificant expense to the State*. Beyond a slight addition perhaps to the amount of capitation grants, the work would be done at the cost of the people themselves. Having before them an object worth contending for, they would soon find the means of becoming worthy of the contest. From a hundred various sources, in addition to the elementary school, they would furnish themselves with weapons for the amicable strife; thus giving to their school-derived ability increased and prolonged effect. Whether thus to allure the people upwards to the light—inciting rather than compelling them to ascend—would not be a measure of policy

at once useful to the public service, promotive of popular education, and inexpensive to the State—a measure therefore worthy of this Conference to recommend, and of the Government to carry out—is the question which I now leave this meeting to discuss and determine.

THE END.

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